Dupl.

Institute for Palestine Studies
Library
DISCARDED

MESSAGE FROM FATEH
TO THE LEBANESE PEOPLE

THE PALESTINE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT - FATEH

On October 26, 1969, the Palestine National Liberation Movement,Fateh, issued the following message to the Lebanese people:

Message from Fateh to the Lebanese people

Since its inception and todate, the Palestinian commando movement has sought not to become a party in any of the internal affairs of any Arab country or to be dragged into any sidebattle of one kind or the other. This was intended to safeguard the potentials of Fedayeen action from being uselessly wasted or taking a course which was never intended for it.

In conformity with this basic principle, the commando Movement has endured a lot. It avoided slanders and boastings and shunned dissension and clashes in every Arab country out of faith in the unity of destiny, faith in the need for all Arab guns to be directed toward the enemy, and faith in the fact that the essence of the cause, the sanctity of the battle and the seriousness of the situation warrant the unification of efforts, the pooling of potentials, and the solution of any side-differences which could arise or be artificially instigated.

In conformity also with our estimation that the expansionist, Zionist danger threatens all Arab land as well as the sovereignty of each of the Arab countries, we found ourselves bound to face this danger on all the threatened Arab fronts. This is why we consider that all Arab territories surrounding the occupied territory as springboards for Fedayeen action and movement. It was neither logical nor acceptable for obstacles or bans to surge within any Arab country to prevent Fedayeen action from being launched therefrom so as to sacrifice for the cause of liberating the sacred land occupied by the enemy. Nor could we imagine for one instant that, while our Arab people in each of their respective countries were being called upon to sacrifice, one such country or one of the institutions of such country would assume the role of the guardian of Zionist occupation by preventing Fedayeen action or limiting its freedom.

Fedayeen action has found, and continues to find in the Lebanese people every support, endorsement and sharing. The cause is one; the destiny is one; and the enemy is one. Some suspicious elements in the Army Command however attempted to harm Fedayeen action from the start by fomenting continuous crises, instigating a state of contstant tension and confronting Fedayeen action with provocative attitudes characterized by harshness and remissness. These suspicious elements kept up with their uninterrupted plotting to instigate a clash between the Palestinian commandos and the members of the Lebanese Army and to sow dissension between the Lebanese people and the Palestinian Revolution.

These suspicious elements which are holding forth in some positions of power did not hesitate, in implementting the schemes ascribed to them, to engineer murder incidents and mass killings, to start criminal attempts in the heart of Beirut and to establish flagrant contacts on the southern borders. Nor did these elements stop for a single moment their black campaign of lies, rumors and exaggerations against the Fedayeen movement.

We always preferred to bear the brunt, including that of the slanderous campaign against Fedayeen action hoping that the conspiring suspicious faction would recover its senses; seeking to avoid traps laid for us; refusing to heed any premeditated provocation; having faith in the maturity of the Lebanese people and their ability to see things, appreciate them and judge them; and foiling the designs of the conspiring suspicious faction.

But the barbarian massacre mounted by these suspicious elements against Palestinian commandos and Lebanese citizens alike in South Lebanon lately revealed how far the criminal hands of this murderous suspicious clique can reach. It also forces us to address ourselves to the Lebanese people and to place the issue in its true perspective:

1. By its nature, Fedayeen action cannot settle in fixed bases near the occupied borders. In Lebanon, specifically, Fedayeen action was launched from or passed through Lebanese territory to accomplish a mission or return from other positions in extremely mobile squads which almost never settled anywhere.

The citizens in south Lebanon offered every assistance within their means to the Fedayeen. And we would like to seize this occasion to hail the spirit of brotherhood displayed by the people in south Lebanon who literally merged with the Palestinian Revolution. Their fate on the hands of the conspiring Lebanese authorities was not different from that of the Fedayeen.

This situation prevailed for almost two years until the suspicious factions in the Lebanese Army Command resolved, for strictly internal considerations linked to the upcoming struggle for power in 1970, on the one hand and for political considerations linked to their suspected ties with some imperialistic circles abroad on the other, to strike against the Fedayeen and obstruct their action.

2. The activities of the suspicious faction in the Army Command in confronting the Fedayeen escalated at the end of 1968. Lebanese Army forces suddenly besieged the South and undertook a series of extraordinary military measures to prevent supplies from reaching the commandos. They also started to pique the Fedayeen. But despite all provocations from the suspicious faction in the Lebanese Army Command, the Fedayeen refrained from retaliating to avoid local repercussions which would only serve the suspicious faction itself and its imperialistic tutors.

3. When the heroic Lebanese people rose on April 23, 1969 to protest the activities of the suspicious faction in the army command and to express support for the Palestinian Revolution, the first signs of the plot were unveiled. The Lebanese security forces on the orders of its suspicious command and in collaboration with the responsible politicians who claim to support Fedayeen action, fired their machine guns on the peaceful demonstrations staged by citizens in Sidon, Beirut Tripoli and Bar Elias. About 30 martyrs fell in this horrible massacre.

4. Execution of this massacre came as a surprise at first. We later realized the intentions behind it which were harbored by the suspicious faction in the political and military leadership. We learned that this suspicious faction was attempting to involve Fedayeen action

in Lebanon's internal affairs so as to achieve their mean objectives either by exploiting religious fanaticism or by concluding alliances with aliens. In the light of these considerations, the Palestinian Revolution decided to foil the scheme of this faction by not offering the criminals the opportunity of getting it involved along with the rest of the Lebanese people in a fanatical and local strife.

5. Despite the innocent blood which was shed;despite the fact that the suspicious faction in the Army Command and government was able to turn down the request of the masses to bring to trial those responsible for the massacres at Sidon, Bar Elias and Tripoli; despite the slanderous campaign mounted by the said suspicious faction against the Redayeen movement; and in order to avoid internal repercussions which would have only served Israel and imperialism, the Palestinian Revolution accepted to negotiate with the Lebanese authorities last May under the slogan of coordination. President Nasser's personal representative, Hassan Sabri al-Kholi, arrived in Beirut to mediate on that basis. A Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Yasser Arafat also arrived in Beirut to negotiate with the Lebanese Authorities on the same basis, namely coordination.

But the same suspicious faction backed up on the principle of coordination after having pretended for a while to accept it. The Palestinian Revolution bore the brunt of interventions, contradictions and lies of the said faction to avoid its overbids and its exploitation of the Fedayeen movement in order to achieve its petty regional designs.

Faithful to its principles and the blood of its martyrs, the Palestinian Revolution insisted however on maintaining its freedom of movement against the enemy.

6. The unwarranted provocations of this suspicious faction against the Palestinian movement, the Palestinian commandos and the Palestinian refugees became more recurrent. Refugee camps were besieged and subjected to strict military measures. Large numbers of Palestinians in South Lebanon were arrested. Commando forces and Lebanese citizens in southern villages who assisted the Palestinian Revolution faced similar uninterrupted provocations from the authorities. These provocations, which soon became daily routine, had a flagrant objective: to explode the situation and push us to face the challenge. Our restraint was unusual because we were fully aware of the intention of this suspicious faction in instigating an atmosphere of disorder and unrest that would offer the excuse for the implementation of its plans about internal domineering. We endured these provocations and their daily pressures to safeguard the security of Lebanon as well as that of the Palestinian revolution and not to get ourselves involved as a party in an internal strife.

7. Disturbed by our faith in the great Lebanese people and our policy of restraint, the suspicious faction went a step further in attempting to mount a series of criminal operations, foremost among them being the burning of Beirut, which would have been attributed to the commando organizations and offered the said faction the double opportunity of satisfying its greed and liquidating Palestinian action. The alertness of the Palestinian Revolution and its close watch over suspicious moves succeeded in foiling these schemes and enabled the Revolution to confront the institutions standing behind them with all the facts to have them assume their full responsibilities. We wouldn't want to go into the details of this sensitive issue because we feel there is a need to circumscribe the crisis and put off the sedition. We hope that the development of events would not force us to reveal everything.

8. Meanwhile, we were watching closely a long chain of contacts across Lebanon's southern borders. Though we are in the process of analyzing them and placing them in their true perspective, we confirm as of this moment, that they have something to do with the massacre mounted by the suspicious faction of the army against the citizens and commandos at Majdal Silm and with the master plan aiming at exploding the internal situation for motives associated with the struggle for power in 1970 and the settlement of local and Arab bills to American imperialists.

The staement of Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Yegal

Allon about Israel's safeguarding of the existing condition in Lebanon, the statements of the U.S. State Department, and the moves of U.S. forces in the Eastern Mediterranean region confirm our views about a concerted Zionist-imperialist-reactionary plot to limit commando action in preparation for cracking down on it.

9. The Nahr el-Bared crisis was the strangest of all those artificially mounted by the authority's institutions to instigate a violent clash between the Palestinians of the said refugee camp and security forces. This deliberate crisis started with a telephone communication between Fateh's representative in Beirut and the representative of the military authority, Maj. Sami el-Khatib. In the light of this communication an authorization was given for the construction of a room in Nahr-el-Bared camp for the Armed Struggle Command. The representative at the camp later called to say that the authorities had broken into the camp and ordered to stop construction. Again, Fateh's representative in Beirut contacted the said major, who reiterated his construction authorization and promised to convey the decision to the military authorities in the Northern Region.

When construction work resumed in the light of the second call, the authorities broke into the camp once again and launched the known aggression.

This is the truth about the Nahr el-Bared crisis... Elements of the suspicious authority approve the construction... then object... then authorize a second time and ask for the resumption of work... then object again and instigate clashes and sedition. This is how we had no doubt that the suspicious elements in the Army Command were deliberately seeking to create conditions for a bloody clash between the armed forces and the Fedayeen that would enable them under such conditions to achieve their domineering aims. Again, our policy was one of restraint to foil the sedition and its objectives.

10. With regards to the Majdal Silm massacre, the siege started under the command of Lt. Gen. Antoine Saad and Col. Ahmed Zakka, in Wadi Solouki. To avoid an armed clash, the Fedayeen units retreated to Majdal Silm. But the siege continued for six suffocating days during which the authority was insisting on one of two alternatives: surrender or complete destruction of the village. The authority refused the offer of the inhabitants of Majdal Silm to open a safeway for the retreat of the commandos. We were surprised by the Army's move as well as the size and variety of forces, including an infantry brigade supported by tanks. We dispatched two of the Movement's top military officials to contact the besieged units, view the situation and agree on a solution... But the Lebanese authority resorted to deceit for after having given the two men an authorization to enter the besieged area, it passed word to its forces there to humiliate them and prevent them from getting to the site so as to prevent news about the subject to become known.

As an added measure of secrecy about the siege and aggression against the Fedayeen, the authority, which was disturbed by the PLO announcement on the subject, closed down the Lebanese papers which dared publish the news under the false pretext that there was an agreement between us to remain silent.

11. As regards the contacts, negotiations and agreements between representatives of the Palestinian Revolution and the Lebanese authorities, they are unfounded. There was no previous agreement between us and the authority whether in the Army, Government or Second Bureau. The only attempted agreement was limited to the contacts which followed the April incidents. The said attempt was revoked by the actions of the suspicious elements in the army and the address of President Charles Helou.

Elements claiming to be nationalistic in the Lebanese Army's Second Bureau exploited our refrain from getting involved in propaganda overbids to deceive and mislead the Lebanese masses with fantasies about contacts and alleged agreements.

12. We thought that the Lebanese presidency and other ruling political circles would seek to understand the facts and the circumstances of the massacre executed by the suspicious military faction behind the scenes. We were surprised once more to find out that the Lebanese presidency's only concern in the flow of letters sent out to Arab governments was to cover up the moves of this suspicious faction and to refuse investigations into the massacre it mounted.

But no matter how great the attempt is to justify, cover up and deny, there remains one obvious fact which can not be concealed--namely that elements of the Lebanese Army undertook, on the orders of known Lebanese officers, to direct Lebanese Arab arms against Arab strugglers, thus undermining the unity of Arab struggle and destiny vis à vis the Zionist enemy if not participating with Zionist and imperialist forces in their flagrant efforts to strike against the commando movement and liquidate the Palestine cause.

This, in brief, is the truth about recent events on the Lebanese scene. We present them in all honesty and with a revolutionary spirit to our brotherly and steadfast Lebanese people, to the struggling people of Palestine and to Arabs everywhere in the hope that truth will be heard and plots against the people of Lebanon will be revealed.

We refused, and continue to refuse, to intervene in Lebanon's internal affairs. We refused, and continue to refuse, to turn into a local force liable to play a role in the balance of power or the struggle for power. We refuse, and continue to refuse, anything that would draw us away from our occupied land where our enemy reigns.

Our guns will continue to be directed toward the Zionist enemy in Acre, Haifa, Safad, Tiberias, Nazareth, Jaffa, Jerusalem and the rest of our cities, towns and villages in the occupied land. We will not allow the enemy or its hirelings to drag us into a side battle in Tyre, Sidon, Beirut or Tripoli.